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FM THE SITUATION ROOM //TOMAK 08//

TO PETER RODMAN FOR THE SECRETARY

UNCLAS VIA BLACK PATCH WH50121

TOMAK 08

FEB 10, 1975

TO: PETER RODMAN FOR THE SECRETARY  
FROM: BRENT SCOWCROFT

ROBERT KLIEMAN SUGGESTED THE FOLLOWING ITEM FROM THE FEBRUARY 8  
ECONOMIST BE BROUGHT TO YOUR ATTENTION.

BEGIN TEXT:

"IF IT HAS TO BE GENEVA"

EVEN IF MR. KISSINGER'S ATTEMPT AT MEDIATION FAILS, HIS RAPPORT  
WITH MR. SADAT SHOULD SURVIVE.

ONCE IN A MONOTONOUS WHILE THE MIDDLE EAST PLAYERS STEAL  
EACH OTHER'S LINES. THEY ARE DOING SO NOW ABOUT THE  
DESIRABILITY OF RECONVENING THE GENEVA PEACE CONFERENCE--  
OR RATHER CONVENING IT, SINCE THE FULL-SCALE CONFERENCE,  
SET UP WITH A FLOURISH IN DECEMBER, 1973, NEVER GOT BEYOND  
THE OPENING SPEECHES. THE RUSSIANS, WHO ARE CO-CHAIRMAN  
WITH THE AMERICANS, WANT A QUICK RETURN TO THE CONFERENCE,  
AND THIS WEEK MR. GROMYKO HAS BEEN PREDICTABLY PLUGGING  
THIS LINE IN DAMASCUS AND CAIRO. THE AMERICANS AND  
EGYPT'S PRESIDENT SADAT WANT TO KEEP THE CONFERENCE AND  
THE RUSSIANS AT A LONG ARM'S LENGTH.

SO DID THE ISRAELIS--UNTIL VERY RECENTLY. BUT NOW A GOOD  
MANY ISRAELIS, INCLUDING SOME SENIOR CABINET MEMBERS,  
HAVE TURNED TURTLE AND ARE SAYING THAT MAYBE IT WOULD BE  
BETTER TO GO TO GENEVA AFTER ALL. NICE FOR MR. GROMYKO,  
DISCONCERTING FOR MR. KISSINGER WHO IS EXPECTED TO DESCEND  
ON THE MIDDLE EAST IN ANOTHER OF HIS POLICY SWOOPS NEXT WEEK.

\*\*\*\*\*WHHR COMMENT\*\*\*\*\*

SECFILE,JANKA

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ISRAEL'S PRIME MINISTER, MR. RABIN, HAS NOT GIVEN ANY SIGN THAT HE AGREES WITH HIS COLLEAGUES (THE FOREIGN MINISTER, MR. ALLON, AND THE DEFENSE MINISTER, MR. PERES) WHO ARE HAVING SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT GENEVA. BUT MR. RABIN HAS NOT PROVIDED MUCH IN THE WAY OF EVIDENT THOUGHT AT ALL. HIS POLICY SO FAR APPEARS TO BE PRIMARILY TO GAIN TIME, ALTHOUGH WHAT HE IS GAINING TIME FOR NOBODY CAN QUITE TELL. ISRAEL IS ALREADY STUFFED TO THE GILLS WITH SOPHISTICATED AMERICAN WEAPONRY; AMERICAN DEFENCE SPECIALISTS RANK THE QUALITY OF ITS ARSENAL SECOND ONLY TO RUSSIA'S AND AMERICA'S OWN. TRUE, DELAYING TACTICS MIGHT POSTPONE ANY PAINFUL DECISION MAKING UNTIL 1976, AND ISRAEL THINKS THAT IT WILL BE TREATED BETTER FROM WASHINGTON DURING THAT YEAR OF AMERICA'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. SUCH DELAYING TACTICS MIGHT BE USED MORE EFFICIENTLY AT THE GENEVA SCRUM THAN IN THE CONTINUING DIALOGUE WITH AND THROUGH MR. KISSINGER.

THIS IS THE MOST CYNICAL INTERPRETATION OF SOME ISRAELIS' NEW-FOUND FONDNESS FOR GENEVA. ISRAEL IS UNDER AMERICAN PRESSURE TO WITHDRAW FROM A SLICE OF OCCUPIED SINAI WHICH INCLUDES TWO MOUNTAIN PASSES AND A MAJOR OILFIELD--AND SO IS IMPORTANT TO ISRAEL STRATEGICALLY AND ECONOMICALLY. THE UNITED STATES REMAINS RELUCTANT TO APPLY ITS PRESSURE TOO CRUELY, BUT THERE IS A LIMIT TO THE TIME DURING WHICH ISRAEL CAN CONTINUE TO SHUFFLE ITS FEET AND ANTAGONISE ITS ONLY MAJOR ALLY. IF A FREE-FOR-ALL AT GENEVA IS LIKELY TO LEAD MERELY TO ANOTHER DEADLOCK, WHY NOT GO THERE AND SPEND A FEW MONTHS ARRIVING AT ONE?

BUT NEITHER MR. ALLON NOR MR. PERES IS A MAN TO SEE EVASION AND DELAY AS ENDS IN THEMSELVES. THE MORE SUBSTANTIAL ARGUMENT IN FAVOUR OF GOING TO GENEVA IS THAT THE ARABS WILL HAVE TO MAKE A COUNTER-OFFER THEN. IN ANY ARAB-ISRAELI BARGAINING PROCESS, IT IS PLAIN WHAT ISRAEL HAS TO OFFER. ITS VICTORY IN THE 1967 WAR LED TO THE SEIZURE OF EGYPTIAN LAND IN SINAI, SYRIAN LAND IN THE GOLAN HEIGHTS, AND PALESTINIAN-INHABITED LAND ON THE WEST BANK AND IN GAZA. IT IS BEING ASKED TO RETURN ALL OR MOST OF THIS LAND WHICH IT ACQUIRED AND OCCUPIED BY FORCE. IN RETURN, THE ONLY WORTHWHILE OFFERING FROM THE ARABS WOULD BE PEACE.

BUT PEACE, AS SUCH, DOES NOT FIGURE IN MR. KISSINGER'S ENVISAGED ARRANGEMENTS. THEIR OBJECTIVE IS TO DEFUSE AN EXPLOSIVE SITUATION BY MAKING IMMEDIATE WAR LESS PROBABLE. SO THE ISRAELIS COMPLAIN THAT THEY ARE BEING ASKED TO CONCEDE SOMETHING TANGIBLE, IN MANY SQUARE MILES OF LAND, BUT IN RETURN ARE BEING OFFERED NOTHING MORE THAN THE IN-

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TANGIBLE LIKELIHOOD THAT FOR SOME TIME TO COME THE ARABS WILL NOT ATTACK THEIR COUNTRY. EVEN IF MR. SADAT WERE TO BE INDUCED TO FORSWEAR WAR FOR A CERTAIN NUMBER OF YEARS, THIS IS NOT AN ASSURANCE WHICH ISRAELIS CAN PASS ON TO THEIR CHILDREN--OR WHICH WILL MAKE THEIR OWN SLEEP LESS HAUNTED.

THE GENEVA PEACE CONFERENCE, ON THE OTHER HAND, WOULD BE SPECIFICALLY ABOUT PEACE. THE GOAL AT THE END OF THE SNAKE-AND-LADDERS IS THE PEACE WHICH ALL SANE ISRAELIS CRAVE AND WHICH MR. SADAT HAS OFFERED. (THERE WOULD BE MANY SNAKES AT THE CONFERENCE THAT COULD SEND EVERYONE RATTLING BACK DOWN TO THE STARTING LINE; THEY INCLUDE THE FUTURE OF JERUSALEM AND THE CREATION OF A PALESTINIAN STATE.) SOME ISRAELIS UNDOUBTEDLY ARE CALLING FOR A BROADLY BASED AGREEMENT FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN THAT THEY BELIEVE THAT IT HAS EVEN LESS CHANCE OF BEING ACHIEVED THAN MR. KISSINGER'S PHASED BILATERAL SETTLEMENTS. BUT OTHERS, PROBABLY INCLUDING MR. ABBA EBAN, ISRAEL'S FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER, HAVE COME TO SEE CHANCES, HOWEVER REMOTE, FOR ISRAEL'S TRUE SECURITY WHICH COULD BE LOST IN THE NIBBLING PROCESS OF BILATERAL AGREEMENT.

WHY RUN AWAY?

OUT OF OFFICE SINCE THE FORMATION OF MR. RABIN'S GOVERNMENT LAST SPRING, MR. EBAN CAN SPEAK AND WRITE WITH MORE FREEDOM FROM RESPONSIBILITY THAN ISRAEL'S PRESENT LEADERS--ALTHOUGH THEIR DISAGREEMENTS ARE PRETTY PUBLIC TOO. A LOT OF WHAT HE HAS BEEN SAYING IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS MAKES A CERTAIN SENSE. HE ARGUES THAT THE SINAI MOUNTAIN PASSES AND THE ABU RUDEIS OILFIELD ARE ISRAEL'S TRUMP CARDS, AND SHOULD BE KEPT FOR THE GENEVA NEGOTIATIONS. IN A LONG ARTICLE FOR THE ISRAELI NEWSPAPER HAARETZ HE WROTE: "THERE IS SERIOUS DOUBT IF IT IS INDEED POSSIBLE OR DESIRABLE TO AVOID FACING THE BIG POLITICAL PROBLEM OF PEACE AND ITS PRICE IN 1975." IN THAT CASE, HE WENT ON TO ARGUE, WHY RUN AWAY FROM THE GENEVA PEACE CONFERENCE?

BLAND AND SKILFUL, MR. EBAN HAS WRIGGLED ISRAEL OFF PLENTY OF HOOKS IN HIS TIME. BUT IF HE AND MR. ALLON AND MR. PERES ARE GIVEN CREDIT THIS TIME FOR LOOKING BEYOND MERE TACTICS, THEIR CONVERSION TO GENEVA SUGGESTS THAT THEY MAY NOW BE MAKING A FRESH INTERPRETATION OF SOVIET POLICY. THEY WOULD NOT WANT TO LET RUSSIA IN ON THE PEACE-MAKING BUSINESS UNLESS THEY BELIEVED THAT, ON BALANCE, RUSSIA SAW ITS INTERESTS BETTER SERVED BY PEACE THAN BY WAR--ALTHOUGH A TORTUOUS MIND, AND ISRAELI MINDS ARE PROPERLY TORTUOUS, COULD ARGUE THAT A RUSSIAN DELEGATE PUMPING A HARD PRO-ARAB LINE AT THE CONFERENCE MIGHT ERODE THE BEAUTIFUL FRIENDSHIP RE-

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TWEEN MR. KISSINGER AND MR. SADAT.

THE SOVIET UNION, LONG DECRIED BY SOME AMERICANS AND MOST ISRAELIS AS THE WOULD-BE WRECKER OF ANY MIDDLE EASTERN PEACE, HAS SEEN IT IN ITS INTEREST TO BE AGAINST WAR, AT LEAST SINCE 1967. THIS, INDEED, WAS ONE OF MR. SADAT'S MANY COMPLAINTS AGAINST HIS FORMER BACKERS. RUSSIA'S REASONING WAS, AND IS, STRAIGHTFORWARD ENOUGH: IT TOOK ACCOUNT OF THE DANGER OF DIRECT CONFRONTATION WITH THE UNITED STATES AND OF THE ARABS' INABILITY TO WIN A QUICK VICTORY AGAINST ISRAEL. UNFORTUNATELY, THIS DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN THAT RUSSIA IS INTERESTED IN A DURABLE MIDDLE EAST PEACE. A PLACID MIDDLE EAST, IF SUCH CAN BE IMAGINED, OFFERS IT NO GAINS. ABOVE ALL, AN EGYPT TURNING EVER FARTHER TOWARDS AMERICA AND THE WEST MUST WORK AGAINST RUSSIA'S LONGER-TERM SCHEMES FOR PROMOTING ITS INFLUENCE IN THE OIL-PRODUCING STATES ON THE GULF. IT IS CERTAIN THAT THE RUSSIANS WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE END OF MR. SADAT. IT IS NOT INCONCEIVABLE THAT THEY MIGHT ENCOURAGE, OR DO NOTHING TO DISCOURAGE, A DISASTROUS SEQUENCE OF EVENTS LEADING TO MR. SADAT'S DOWNFALL.

THERE IS NO NEED FOR ANYBODY TO WARN MR. SADAT AGAINST PUTTING HIS TRUST IN THE RUSSIANS. HIS TRUSTFULNESS IN MR. KISSINGER'S ABILITY TO OBLIGE ISRAEL TO DO WHAT IT DOES NOT WANT TO DO MAY HAVE RAISED FALSE HOPES IN EGYPT-- AND ANGERED OTHER ARABS, INCLUDING THE INCREASINGLY DISAFFECTED PALESTINIANS, WHO ACCUSE MR. SADAT OF BREAKING THE PROMISES THAT HE MADE AT THE RABAT SUMMIT. BUT IF, AS ON BALANCE SEEMS PROBABLE, MR. KISSINGER FAILS IN HIS PRESENT EFFORTS TO GET INTERIM AGREEMENTS, IT IS VITAL THAT THE NEW EGYPTIAN-AMERICAN FRIENDSHIP SHOULD SURVIVE A TRANSFER OF NEGOTIATIONS TO GENEVA.

WARM REGARDS,  
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